

Testimony on Senate Bill 1195
Jennifer Vaughan

My name is Jennifer Vaughan, I attended Explorations Charter School from 2005-2006, and graduated to go on to Uconn. Without going to Explorations, this would not have been possible. I transferred to Explorations from Housatonic Valley Regional, and had been struggling there, Explorations made it possible for me to excel in school, taking a full course load at high school as well as three college courses during the year I was there.

While Explorations may not be what is thought of as a traditional charter school, due to its rural setting, it provides an essential service for students like me, who for one reason or another struggled to excel at a traditional public school. It draws in students from a wide area, some of whom are willing to make an hour and a half commute just to attend. The school has been, and continues to be dependant on the donations of time and supplies from parents and community members. This is especially true of the adventure education curriculum which helps to support and realize the schools motto of achievement through self discipline. This program works along with the core academic programs in the school to build students self confidence, and ability to self motivate.

I have seen first hand since graduating how beneficial the education provided by the charter schools programs is, through my own achievements and also through the achievements of the students who are there today. Last fall I came back to the school as a substitute teacher, which has given me the opportunity to see how the school continues to benefit the students who attend. I have spoken to current students who credit the school with their achievements, from grades which have soared from failing at their previous schools, to honor roll or high honors there, to personal achievements such as reaching the top of a challenging rock climb.

The school allows the students who are willing to push themselves achieve greatness through varied opportunities from after school programs, to the college partnership program, and teaches them valuable life skills through a mandated senior portfolio and a job skills course. Please pass Senate Bill 1195 so that other students can receive the same opportunities that I have had.